

Ambassador's Remarks for F-16 Ceremony in Poznan  
Wednesday, November 9, 2011

I want to thank the Minister of Defense and the Polish Air Force Commander for extending an invitation to me and to the members of our United States Air Force to participate in today's events.

It is fitting that we all find ourselves gathered in historic Poznań today. The June 1956 Poznań protests are a famous milestone in the modern history of Poland and one of the events that led to the fall of communism in Europe.

After that fall, Poland joined NATO, and Polish leadership rapidly took a series of significant decisions demonstrating Poland's commitment to the Alliance. One tangible manifestation of that commitment and an important milestone in the modern history of the Polish Armed Forces was the bold decision made 50 years after the Poznań June protests to establish the first F-16 airbase in Central Europe.

**Jestem dumny, że w Polsce stacjonują  
najnowocześniejsze (najlepsze) F-16 (szesnaście) w  
Europie!**

[I'm proud that Poland is now home to the most modern F-16s in Europe.]

I am also very proud to have signed the agreement last June that will bring American pilots and crew to Poland beginning next year. Their presence will insure that our already excellent bilateral defense cooperation continues and it will deepen our ability to operate together as NATO Allies. America is proud to be an ally and friend of Poland.

Today is full of symbols, whether the new unit flag bestowed on Krzesiny Air Base, or the Polish and American F-16s that (will fly/have flown) together overhead. Behind all those symbols is an enduring commitment to freedom. It is a commitment both our nations, as steadfast leaders in the NATO Alliance, understand and take very seriously.

Freedom has a feeling, unique among all others. It is a feeling that reverberates inside of each one of us. It is also a feeling shared by our F-16 pilots when they hear the roar of the jet engines each time they take off from Krzesiny Air Base for training in order to ultimately defend what we all hold most dear—freedom.

The feeling of freedom, with its sights and symbols -- the unit flag, the fighter jets, an expanding F-16 partnership that has its very origins here at Krzesiny on the outskirts of historic Poznan. . .that feeling of our shared freedom is something that I will take away from today's events.

**Dziękuję, że razem z państwem mogłem wziąć udział w  
dzisiejszej ceremonii.**

Thank you, again, for providing me this opportunity to  
participate today with all of you.